



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Lieutenant Governor

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February 19, 2007

Mr. Thomas A. Edmonds
Executive Director
Virginia State Bar
707 East Main Street, Suite 1500
Richmond, Virginia 23219-2800

Dear Mr. Edmonds:

It has come to my attention that the Virginia State Bar is considering a revision of its long-standing rule prohibiting legislators from being employed by law firms that actively lobby the General Assembly and other state government agencies. I am writing to express my strong opposition to this revision and encourage you to maintain the current prohibition against such affiliations.

Since the founding of the Commonwealth, we have enjoyed the privileges and responsibilities of a citizen legislature. It is my belief that Virginians benefit from a system of government where legislators who make the law two months out of the year then return home and live under the laws they created in their individual families and businesses.

However, one of the potential drawbacks of a citizen legislature is the potential conflict of interest that legislators may confront from time to time between their public duties and their private vocations and activities. We must do everything we can to avoid such conflicts of interest, either actual or perceived, to assure the integrity of our system of government.

The legislature has taken what steps it can to help prevent such conflicts, including the adoption of strict conflict guidelines, the ability to seek the independent council of the Attorney General's office on questions of potential conflicts, and the ability to abstain from voting on matters where conflicts may exist.

However, even with these steps there is more that can be done to reduce the potential occurrence of conflicts, and the Virginia State Bar has historically helped do this by imposing a proper restriction on the ability of lawyer legislators

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to be associated with firms that actively lobby the General Assembly and other state government agencies.

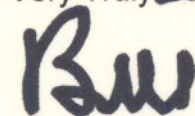
It is my belief that the repeal of this prohibition would at the very least create the perception of impropriety. In the public's eye it would be unseemly for a lawyer legislator to be employed by a law firm that actively lobbies the General Assembly and other state government agencies.

In addition, I fear that the repeal of this prohibition could increase the possibility of actual incidents of collusion and improper conduct. If either of these consequences occurs, the public will lose faith in our system of government. We cannot allow that to happen.

For all of the reasons discussed above, I strongly urge you to maintain the current prohibition against such affiliations. It has served Virginia well in the past, and I am confident that it will continue to serve Virginia well in the future.

Thank you for considering my views on this very important issue.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bolling', written over a horizontal line.

WILLIAM T. BOLLING
Lieutenant Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia

WTB/